

DRAFT BCClarke [ ] (17 Jul 80)

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SUBJECT: NFAC Research Production Planning

1. A major and continuing responsibility of the National Foreign Assessment Center is the effective planning of its research analysis, to two ends: that the substantive issues of present and future importance to foreign policy formulation are addressed on a timely basis; and that the personnel resources of NFAC are properly directed.

2. To enable NFAC intelligence production managers better to meet this responsibility, NFAC has instituted a program of semi-annual planning for the research to be undertaken by the five production offices.

3. The experience of the first year in undertaking a directorate-wide research planning program suggests that more continuous and direct involvement in the planning process is needed on the part of the Office Directors.

4. The NFAC Research Planning Steering Group (RPSG) is hereby established. It is chaired by the Deputy Director, NFAC. Its members are the Director and Deputy Director of OGCR, OER, OPA, OSR, and OSWR.

5. The RPSG is responsible for the guidance, direction, implementation, and accomplishment of all phases of the research planning cycle. Its first assignment is to plan and carry out the research planning for the January-December 1981 planning period.

6. The RPSG is assisted by the members of the Production Planning and Review Group in the PME Staff. In addition, the RPSG may call upon members of the National Intelligence Council and the Senior Review Panel for help, counsel, and participation.

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NFAC 5003-80

15 July 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, NFAC

FROM : Maurice C. Ernst  
Director, OER

SUBJECT : Production Planning Process

1. The present production/research planning process suffers from trying to achieve too many objectives at the same time. The attempt to simultaneously:

- A. Identify key issues;
- B. Develop priority research studies on an NFAC-wide basis; and
- C. Record all likely non-periodical products;

is in my view far too complex.

2. Although the process of discussing issues and production plans in inter-office working groups is clearly useful, these groups are only able to make marginal changes in the Office production proposals and the number of projects is so large that the issues identified turn out to be no more than convenient branches on which to hang the projects. Moreover, it is impossible to distinguish projects involving a substantial allocation of resources from those which are merely anticipated quick responses to hot issues. Indeed, many planned projects appear to be no more than a gleam in someone's eye, in the absence of any evidence that the time, skills, and data base needed to do the projects are available. Apart from the fact that the large number of projects makes the inter-office production planning process unmanageable, there are other substantial disadvantages in the present system. In particular, the length of the project listings turns people off, a large percent of the planned projects will almost certainly not be completed in time, if at all, and there is a risk that NFAC's personnel resources will appear a great deal larger to outsiders than they are in reality.

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3. In view of these problems, I propose a change in NFAC's production/research planning procedures which would differentiate between research planning and production planning. Briefly, research planning should identify key issues and lines of research, should specify individual projects only when the necessary resources, data base, and methodology have been identified and should cover periods of a year or in some cases longer. Production plans, should specify only ad hoc projects, and, except for certain interagency projects, no more than quarterly. Since research plans have the greatest impact on the allocation of resources, their preparation should involve the most elaborate inter-office discussion. The system for preparing production plans, on the other hand, should be simple and straight forward, with inter-office coordination but discussion only where necessary.

4. Something like the following format might be appropriate for research planning, which would be done once a year:

- A. The NFAC regional and functional working groups meet to discuss and propose cardinal issues and priorities and make their recommendations available to the offices, the NIC and D/NFAC.
- B. The issues are discussed and approved by the NFAC Production Board.
- C. The individual offices and the NIC prepare drafts of their own research plans. For each relevant issue, they specify:
  - (1) The general nature of planned coverage of the topic, e.g. whether through periodicals, ad hoc papers, major new lines of research, or several of these;
  - (2) The plans for specific lines of research including exploratory research. These should specify, where feasible the questions to be addressed, the approximate time required, the likely phasing of work, and a rough estimate of resources allocated for the purpose. Planning of lines of research would not specify due dates for projects.

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- 3) The objective, outline, methodology, information base, and resource cost of specific research projects about which enough is known to move out of an exploratory mode to a concrete plan with a due date.
- D. The NFAC groups meet again to discuss the Office and NIC research plan.
- E. NFAC Office Directors meet, if necessary to iron out problems.
- F. The research plan is approved by the NFAC Production Board.
5. The main problem I can foresee in this system is arriving at a consensus of what constitutes "research." My view is that research is a process of getting into a position to understand important questions. The research process may involve a major paper taking months to complete or alternatively a series of shorter papers, each on a different aspect of the question. It should be distinguished from the process of responding to policymakers' interests or current events by giving our best judgment based on readily available information. Although individual research projects would rarely be scheduled more than a year ahead, lines of research and certain types of exploratory research could run well into the future.
6. I believe that production planning, as distinguished from research planning can best be done on a quarterly basis. This is the period OER used for several years, having previously tried both annual planning and no systematic planning at all. We found that, unlike annual plans, we were in fact able to produce nearly all of the projects established in the quarterly plans, although often with some delay. Given a mechanism for identifying issues and lines of research on an annual basis for NFAC as a whole, NFAC production planning could proceed on a quarterly basis. This means that most of the work would be done by the individual offices and the NIC, and coordination would rarely involve major problems. Quarterly production plans should include all ad hoc formal projects. Where additional projects are layed on in the course of the

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quarter they should be added to the data base so that an updated plan could be run off. The production plan should be realistic so that you and other users can have some reasonable confidence in them. The procedure would be simple:

- A. Each office and the NIC prepares a draft plan in machine readable form.
- B. A draft plan is coordinated among other NFAC units and the Production Planning Staff.
- C. A combined plan is approved by the NFAC Production Board and yourself.

7. Since NIEs and other inter-agency papers are often planned more than a quarter in advance they should be shown as a separate section of the production plan together with any other projects which might be planned far in advance.

[Redacted Signature Box]

MAURICE C. ERNST

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CCS:

[Redacted Name Box]

K. Knorr

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16 July 1980

TO: Bruce Clarke

Research Production Planning

1. On the basis of the Tuesday meeting with the chairpersons of the working groups, Maurice Ernst's memo, and my own reflections, I have come to the following conclusions (some of which, however, are tentative).
2. Production planning should be done in two parts in order to avoid many of the defects, revealed in the current experiment, which I detailed in my memo of 14 July.
3. I am not sure that, as Ernst suggests, the dividing line should be drawn between research and ad hoc production in response to consumer demand (although it does seem important that all offices use a uniform definition of research). I would draw the line between production plans, including research, which the Offices and the NIC propose to do, and research on important issues which these plans neglect or ignore. The first phase would presumably include researches on firmly established issues of importance which the Offices and NIC are prepared to undertake, for the most part in response to and, in a lesser part, in anticipation of, consumer demand. The proposed researches should not include a wish list. They should only comprise researches which Offices and NIC are fully prepared to undertake. The second part would be comprised of researches, not included in Office and NIC plans, which address: (a) new questions to be put to established issues worked by Offices and NIC; (b) questions posed by new developments in the outside world; and (c) broad issues that tend to be neglected because they demand multidisciplinary and, normally, interoffice research.
4. The process would logically begin by the formulation of production plans by the Offices and the NIC by means of their own choosing.

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5. Two objectives would be pursued in the second phase:

a. Office and NIC production plans would be examined for valid need (including redundancies) and opportunities for interoffice research. This could be done by the interoffice working groups, the SRP, and representatives of DD/NFA.

b. Proposals for new researches would be formulated on the basis of inputs from Office and NIC wish lists, interoffice working groups, the SRP and possibly outside consultants (as described in my memo of 14 July).

6. In the third phase, the two sets of proposals developed in Phase II would be reviewed, prioritized, and finally consolidated.

7. Finally, I would suggest that "cardinal issues" be dropped as a conceptual tool. It has not revealed itself as a useful tool. It is simply a metaphor. Its use does not solve anything.

8. Attached is a rival proposal by Bob Wagner that addresses the same problems. I regard it as a serious alternative.

  
Klaus Knorr

Attachment:  
As stated

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Klaus Knorr  
Senior Review Panel

FROM : [ ]  
Chief, Production Planning and Review Group  
NFAC Planning, Management, and Evaluation Staff

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SUBJECT : Thoughts on the Cardinal Issue Problem

1. I would suggest the following approach.

1. D/NFAC working with the Chairman of the NIC, the SRP develops a definition of Cardinal Issue.
2. Employing that definition, the NIOs are commissioned to develop a very selective list of such issues to become the central core of the NFAC Research Production Plan. Realistically, not all NIOs will be able to do this well nor will they as a group be able to cover the appropriate range of Global issues. To overcome these weaknesses, the SRP should have the responsibility to review and critique the submissions, to suggest new issues and to make further recommendations as appropriate. The Office Directors and the Working Groups which designed the initial issue packages should then have the opportunity to review and comment on the proposals. It should be the NIOs responsibility to present D/NFAC with a selective list on his area of concern. As far as global issues are concerned, the SRP working with the Office Directors and the Chairpersons of Global issue groups should refine the issues already developed and present a similar prioritized list to D/NFAC.

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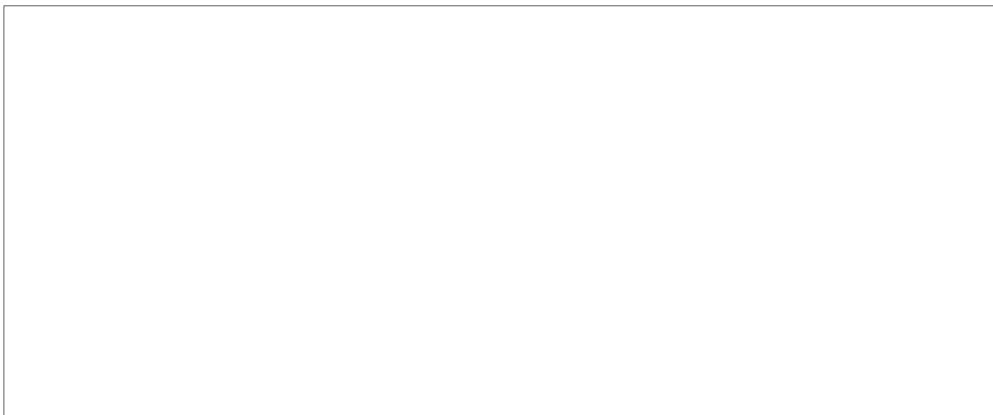
3. Once the issues are defined and accepted the working groups for each area or Global issue should convene to discuss and to develop a proposed research program relative to each issue. There should be participation in each group of representatives of each Office, the NIC and the SRP. The proposed lines of research should be submitted to each Office for comment and to D/NFAC. This should be done prior to the development of the individual Office Research Programs in Phase I. As part of Phase I the Offices should identify those projects designed to support the line of research developed.
4. Once the Offices have identified research work to be done in support of a given issue these should be consolidated into separate packages and reviewed as the central core of research by the working groups in Phase II.
5. At the same time, the Offices will be developing a projection of more routine work that will form the bulk of the Research Production Plan. This work should be organized according to issue headings much as in the current draft plan so that work is easily retrievable.

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6. In effect, we will have a two-tiered program--one part focused on a relatively few issues and related dedicated research and the bulk of the research program. The latter ought to encompass all IAs and RPs planned by the Offices.



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14 July 1980

## Research Production Planning:

### Critique and Proposals

#### A. Critique

Although the new planning process probably yielded an improvement over previous procedures, it revealed a number of weaknesses that are more or less remediable.

1. Cardinal Issues To start with broad Cardinal Issues is indispensable. But (a) their formulation occurred too hastily and without sufficient inputs, (b) there was an unresolved problem of how to separate global from regional and country issues, and (c) there was and remains the question of whether "regular" or obvious issues (which the offices would do as a matter of course) should be treated along with "new" issues (requiring non-routine efforts). The "new" ones should be relatively few and receive special attention.

2. The productivity of the working groups differed a great deal. This depended mainly on the managerial ability, substantive competence and especially dedication of the chairperson. Secondarily, it depended on the composition of the groups in terms of representing different substantive and interdisciplinary competences.

The working groups were instructed to derive particular research themes within broad Cardinal Issue areas. Some groups did this well while others operated at too a high a level of generality. To the extent that the latter disposition prevailed, it was not clear to the offices what research exactly was called for.

3. Generally speaking, the offices spelled out the research tasks--especially their bread-and-butter work--which they intended to perform in any case. Other than that, the match between proposed researches and Cardinal Issues was not very good. The matching between the one and the other was often partial, tangential, by implication. One does not get the feeling that the office plans were seriously driven by the Cardinal Issues. In part, this outcome probably resulted from the fact that the offices had already conceptualized a program before the Cardinal Issues appeared on the scene.

4.. When the working groups reassembled, their work was handicapped by computer information problems and sometimes by the fact that the abstracts of proposed office projects were insufficiently informative.

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5. The process did not work well in generating enough plans for inter-office research. Some other mechanism is required if more such work is to be undertaken.

6. The process also suffered somewhat by the lacking inter-office consensus on what is to be taken as "research" as distinct from current intelligence.

7. Finally, it is possible that not enough time was allowed for the planning process.

## B. Proposal for the Next-Go-Around

### Stages

#### 1. Formulation of Cardinal Issues

They should be prepared by one person (or two or three). More inputs are needed. The offices and the NIC should be asked to present a list of routine issues which they will in any case address in terms of research. For "new" issues, inputs might be solicited from the offices, NIC (including the AG), and the SRP. In addition, it would be useful to solicit ideas from a group of outside generalist consultants (no more than 10) representing different disciplines, different ranges of expertise, and academics as well as suitable ex-consumers. They should be given a day to study the past year's production program and be asked, during a second day, to present additional issues to be addressed by intelligence.

2. Properly selected working groups would be asked to derive specific themes for research projects in the Cardinal Issues areas and do so with clarifying descriptions.

3. The DD/NFA should attach priorities to the research themes (to all or perhaps only to "new" projects) and also indicate those calling for inter-office research.

4. Office and NIC production planning. Office and NIC plans should indicate clearly the extent to which "new" issues and themes have been accommodated and, if not, the reasons for their failure to do so. They should also report on the extent to which proposed inter-office work was or was not being programmed. Finally, they should be asked to indicate clearly which researches are definitely expected to be done, and which represent secondary commitments.

5. Working groups reassemble to review office and NIC programs and report on gaps, redundancies, etc.

### Time Frame

The total amount of time allotted to the process should be somewhat increased (perhaps by two weeks).

### Instructions

Somehow instructions all along the line have to gain new height of clarity and insistence in order to insure that all parts operate in a uniform and desired manner in terms of what precisely is expected in each phase, on the format of computer inputs, and on what is meant by research for purposes of the exercise.



Klaus Knorr

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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

NFAC #5043-80  
16 July 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment  
FROM : National Intelligence Officer for Africa  
SUBJECT : Research Production Planning

1. I listened with considerable interest to the meeting on 15 July, and I now have a much greater appreciation than I had before of the problem with which you were wrestling. I have one or two thoughts on the subject, looked at perhaps from a management point of view, and I add them herewith for what they may be worth:

1) It seems to me that people around the table were essentially asking for a prescription of the cardinal issues which would come down from your desk in fairly definitive terms. The offices may make some objections but the issues nevertheless would be accepted as a direct mandate from you.

2) This is not to say that all of those concerned would not be consulted in the process of arriving at the final list of cardinal issues. Rather I would think that a process such as this might be useful:

- At the beginning of the planning process all offices except the NIO's would be asked to provide suggestions for cardinal issues to be considered for the next planning period.
- Suggestions would be collated and considered with both NIC as a group or by an executive committee of the NIC appointed by you with assistance from the SRP, and even outside consultants.
- The list refined by the NIC process would be submitted to you for final scrutiny and would ultimately be issued by you with such additions as you or the NIC might see fit.

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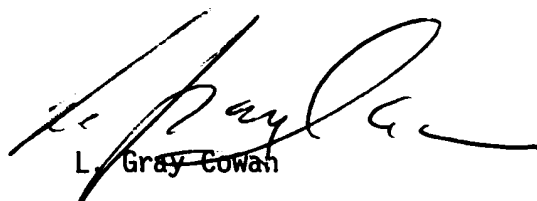
2. A final list might well be limited to 12 or 15 cardinal issues which, in the judgment of the NIC and yourself, would have the greatest relevance to policy issues likely faced by government in the period under consideration.

3. This process might serve to reduce the time spent in discussion of the cardinal issues and would also serve to make use of the NIC as an instrument to assist you in the final decision on the list. No one could argue that they had not been consulted in the process; the ultimate list would be largely a refinement of suggestions (with additions) already made by the office chiefs.

4. It would seem reasonable that you might require an appropriate percentage (say, 40-50%) of the work of each office be devoted to research topics specifically related to the chosen cardinal issues, and each office would be required to formulate a research program dealing with these issues. The progress of this research could be monitored throughout the period by means of periodic reports to you.

5. The remaining time could be devoted to research projects that the various offices felt were important to them but which may not be related to the issues--i.e., this would be "free" research time or time which would be claimed by unanticipated community assignments.

6. I am not certain that this process would result in a great saving of time, but it would provide clear guidance for research on the cardinal issues that the NIC and yourself were agreed as being the most important in any given period.



L. Gray Cowan

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SUBJECT: Research Production Planning

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